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ABSTRACT

Basic facts of collegiate life, key elements for scholastic success, and sources of help are described to assist students. Special strategies that are needed to make it through college are explained, based on approaches that have worked for many students as well as the recommendations of teachers and counselors. Attention is directed to: reasons for going to college, how to cope with outside time demands and the independence that is required at college, how to plan for the future and the daily/weekly schedule, taking advantage of services and campus activities, study approaches that produce the best results, tips to make class attendance more profitable, mastering the process of completing term papers and other major projects, achieving good grades on tests and easing the anxiety over them, and overcoming personal pressures and course difficulties. The following benefits of college attendance are reviewed: enjoying culture and leisure, developing the ability to learn on one's own, developing greater self-knowledge/self-confidence and the ability to cope, and becoming more civic-minded. Considerations involved in planning a college program and future career are addressed. (SW)

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Making It

THROUGH COLLEGE

OR, GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH OUT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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A Letter TO THE STUDENT

During the past forty years, a remarkable expansion has taken place in access to higher education. Many people who never before had enjoyed the opportunity to attend college have appeared on campus to reap its benefits.

To accommodate them, the campus itself has been transformed. Today, the average college and university serves more than six times the number of students attending in 1945.

At the same time, costs have risen even more dramatically. Institutions have tried hard not to pass along all these inflationary increases to students. Instead, they have streamlined their collegiate procedures wherever possible for the sake of economy.

The result is what some students express as "feeling like a number." They consider such routines as registration too impersonal and they find too little of the individual attention they need. They conclude that the institution does not care and does not have what it takes to help them succeed.

But most institutions do care. They do have the resources to help students succeed. The shortfall, because of the numbers and dollars involved, is in picking students out of the crowd and connecting them with the necessary assistance.

This booklet is designed to bridge that gap, between the student and the resources of the college. It explores the basic facts of collegiate life. It identifies some key elements of scholastic success. It directs students to the means of achieving it.

The means are the student's own initiative and the instructional staff to guide it toward fulfillment. That we are eager to help is demonstrated by the very publication of this booklet. It is the work of one university's professional union and it represents the commitment of every professional in our large system, including the chancellor of the university, its board of trustees and the presidents of all eighteen colleges, who have contributed to the success of this endeavor.

The message to our students is that we want you to succeed. Here in brief outline is what it takes and the kind of help we are ready to offer you.

Dr. Irwin Polishook, President
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

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Contents

Is it possible to attend classes, keep the family happy, study, maybe hold down a job, write papers, juggle the finances, pass tests—and *enjoy* college at the same time?

If you'll look at the record of your college's graduates, you'll see the answer clearly. Many of them labored under similar loads. Yet they made it through college and into the larger world, taking with them good memories of their college life.

How did they manage to succeed *and* like it?

Usually, not by just doing what comes naturally. College is different from high school and from other kinds of activity. It leaves you largely on your own to meet its demands and to gain its rewards. That's unique, and it's not easy. That's why, no matter how well you've coped outside, you need a special set of strategies to make it through college.

This booklet will clue you in on some of those strategies. It's not theory and it's not just common sense. It's a compilation of how-to's that have worked for many students and are recommended by your teachers and counselors.

Do you need this? You might think not, since you're obviously "college material" or the institution would not have admitted you. Yet one out of three students, all college material, don't make it through. We don't want that one to be you.

And we don't want you to merely get by or muddle through. Muddling through is all sweat. You can do better than that: you can *enjoy* college. You can do that not only by getting into the fun that your campus has to offer but by achieving in your college *work*.

One thing this booklet isn't: the end. It's a brief first step towards a rewarding college career. And it will point you to the next steps and to other people who can help.

Take advantage of this help. You're lucky to be in a college where the professionals care about you. They are the ones who made this booklet possible. Their best advice is here, and their further help is available to you personally on campus. Go for it.

This is what's inside:

WHY GO TO COLLEGE IN THE FIRST PLACE? You already know, right? Yet some good reasons may be news to you, may change *how* you go and how well you succeed. **Pages 4-5.**

MAKING COLLEGE 'IT': How to cope with the competition for your college time and energy—like jobs and family—and how to deal with the freedom of it all. **Page 6.**

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SOLVING THE BIG PROBLEMS: Overcoming personal pressures, course difficulties, overloads—how to avoid giving up. **Page 14.**

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WHY *Go* TO COLLEGE

Jobs! Jobs! Jobs! That's what college is all about, as far as most freshmen are concerned. By the time they're seniors, though, they've discovered there's much more to it (1).

Of course college may prepare you for a career. First it helps expand your view of yourself and of what's out there, so that you can make an intelligent career choice. Then it develops your resources to succeed in your chosen field. It builds your knowledge and, more important than what you learn, the ability to keep on learning long after you're out of college.

These advantages will give you a better chance of getting a job. And they'll give you a better chance of getting a good job, no matter how you define "good job." Is it job satisfaction, work that is challenging and varied (rather than monotonous), security (staying employed), status, the opportunity to get ahead, earning potential? All of these job qualities are made more possible by college attendance.

What's more, a good college education will give you the depth to progress in your career and the flexibility to change careers later if you choose to, as many people do.

Most freshmen assume these things when they first set foot on campus. What they find out later is that work, vital as it is, represents only one aspect of their lives. They discover new territories of knowledge and art to explore, for their own sake. And they realize that the whole of their future, not just their careers, may be enriched by higher education.

How does this happen? It happens through a wide range of experiences with people you meet inside and outside the classroom. It happens through extracurricular activities. It happens through your career-related studies, which have uses beyond your occupation. And it happens through the liberal arts.

Liberal arts are such subjects as literature, languages, history, philosophy and surveys of science, that are your general education rather than your narrow career training. Who needs them? Liberal arts are useless to cogs in an occupational machine. But if you want to be a whole person and to understand who you are and how you relate to the rest of your world, they're essential. That's why the liberal arts are required in college.

Vocational schools advertise that they dispense with all that stuff, and they're not lying. Only college can give you the total experience, and its benefits—in self-discovery, independence, individuality, self-confidence, the ability to cope and the capacity to participate in the general culture.

If you approach college with the tunnel vision that sees nothing but a job or a degree at the end, you'll miss these vital points of collegiate life:

• Why the basic skills are so important, even if you get no "credit" for them. Writing, reading, and mathematics

(1) This section is drawn from Aaron Alexander, *Why Go to College* (New York: Professional Staff Congress, 1980).

(2) Herbert Bienstock, "The '80's Job Market is Rosy . . . ," *The New York Times*, January 7, 1979.

(3) Scott Campbell Brown, "Educational attainment of workers—some trends from 1975 to 1978," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1979.

(4) Howard R. Bowen, *Investment in Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p.89.

ARE YOU GETTING TOO SMART?

Is there danger that college will make you *too* smart?

There are people who would have you believe that. They are the ones who believe that college is for the elite—for a select few, chosen arbitrarily, on the basis of wealth primarily. They are *for* college—for themselves, for their own children, for others in their "class." You, they say, don't need it. You, they say, don't need to be educated—or worse still, "overeducated." It's a "dumb investment," they say; it will only lead to "underemployment"—jobs beneath your college preparation.

They are wrong for a number of reasons. First, they ignore all the benefits of college that improve your life rather than simply your occupation.

But they are also wrong about your prospects for employment itself. Here's why:

"The growing complexity of our society requires more—not fewer—highly trained people to run its economic machinery. The notion of the 'overeducated American' is a myth. Technological innovation generally results in jobs being eliminated at the lower end of the skill level and added at the upper end" (2).

The truth is that most college graduates are not "underemployed"; they are working in fields for which they have been prepared. Some are "underemployed" and some will be—as long as the number of people exceeds the number of jobs. But what happens is that college graduates "bump" less-educated people out of jobs for which college was not before required. People without college then suffer from the competition and become unemployed. College gives you a distinct advantage.

That's why the United States Department of Labor says:

"College graduates are most likely to be in the labor force, least likely to be unemployed, and more of them continue to hold the highest paying professional and managerial jobs" (3).

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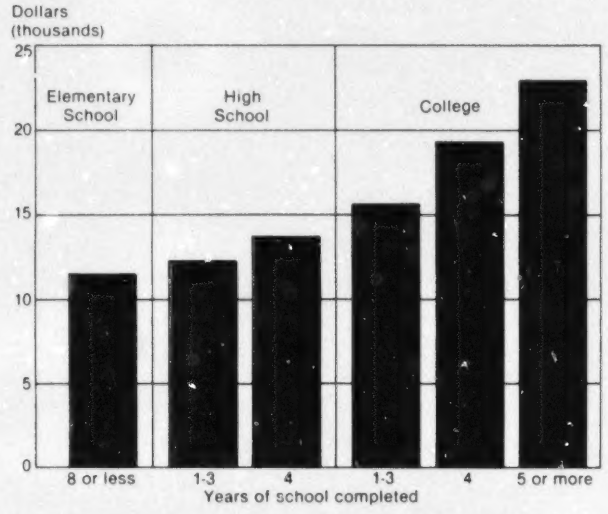
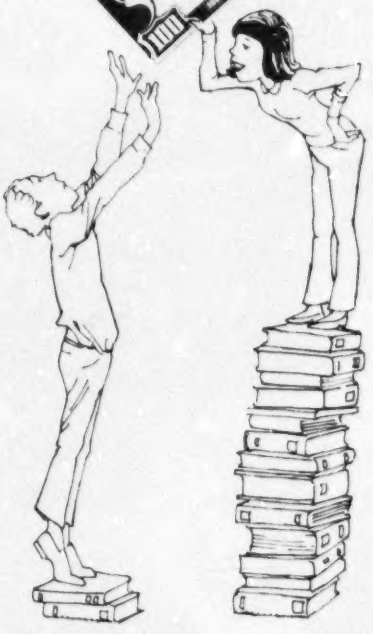
IN THE FIRST PLACE?

INCOME INCREASES AS THE NUMBER OF YEARS OF SCHOOLING INCREASES

Average annual income for year-round full-time workers, 1981



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 2149, Sept. 1982



IN CASE YOU'VE BEEN 'JOBBED'

In case you've been conned into thinking that all college is about is jobs, period, here are some other—documented—benefits of higher education:

• **The capacity to participate in the general culture**—"to read significant literature, to understand and appreciate the arts, to converse with educated people about matters of importance, to comprehend the news in historical, geographic, and social perspective, to have some basic understanding of science and technology, and to be at home with religious and philosophical issues" (4).

• **The ability to learn on your own** and to keep on learning. This is one of the most important benefits of higher education. It applies to any career and to every other aspect of your life. You now have the ability to learn. College sharpens it to the limits of your potential.

• **Self-discovery,** independence and individuality—through contact with people, ideas, and environments different from those of your childhood, through involvement in new experiences, and through the re-thinking of your own ideas and goals.

• **Self-confidence,** based on a greater sense of self-worth, a higher self-image, and better intellectual, social and communication skills.

• **Richer leisure.** College can expand your pleasures and pastimes. By acquainting you with new areas of art, music, literature, drama and recreation, college enables you to *enjoy* more.

• **The ability to cope.** Educated people can better process information—and spot misinformation. This enables them to get more for their money, to be better consumers and to cope more effectively with a wide range of practical day-to-day matters, from dealing with red tape and bureaucracies to seeing through misleading advertisements, from preparing their tax returns to asserting their legal rights.

• **Civic savvy.** College education helps you understand how your community and your country work, and your place in them. By exposing you to ethical and social issues, it makes you less prejudiced, less irrational, more liberal toward the rights of others, more humanitarian, more conscious of, interested, informed and involved in the world around you.

are "basic" because they're at the basis of everything else in college and beyond. Only by mastering them will you be able to cope with your other studies, your work and other activities.

• Why you should do well in liberal arts and other required courses that may not seem clearly related to your occupational field. They may very well be related to your career choice, now or later, in ways you can't guess. And they are certainly related—and necessary—to the rest of your existence.

• What college has to offer you outside the classroom, what is not mandatory but highly profitable if you want to get your full money's worth out of college.

Between what your college has to offer and what you get out of it there is some distance. Getting from here to there is what the rest of this booklet is about.

6 MAKING *College* 'IT'

Jobs, family, recreation, friends—there are all sorts of competition for your college time and energy.

Some, like work, may be absolutely necessary. Some, like your social life, are downright wholesome. Some are simply wastes. But your most worthwhile needs can be juggled if you put college in its place: first.

This kind of concentration is especially vital to your *first year* of study, whether you're fresh out of high school or an older student. It's then that you're likely to make or break your college career.

Jobs are formidable obstacles. They lift chunks of your resources out of your schedule and they may leave you less than sparkling for your school work.

The surprising fact research has discovered is that having a job usually increases your chances of finishing college, especially if your work takes less than twenty-five hours a week. One reason is that a job is often an educational experience in itself. More important, it requires you to get organized, to budget your time, and to use the time you do have more productively.

Because college is a full-time job, other full-time jobs should be avoided if they can be. Some students absolutely need the income. But others may not if they take advantage of all available financial aid. Since this is such an essential factor in your college career, you should explore every possibility with your college's financial aid officer.

But even a full-time job can be managed. All the other obstacles to collegiate success, such as excessive family responsibilities, even family resistance, have been overcome by others. You can handle them too if you set out to. And this is the time to do it, because it's at the foundation of all the other strategies of succeeding in college.

That may be harder than it sounds.

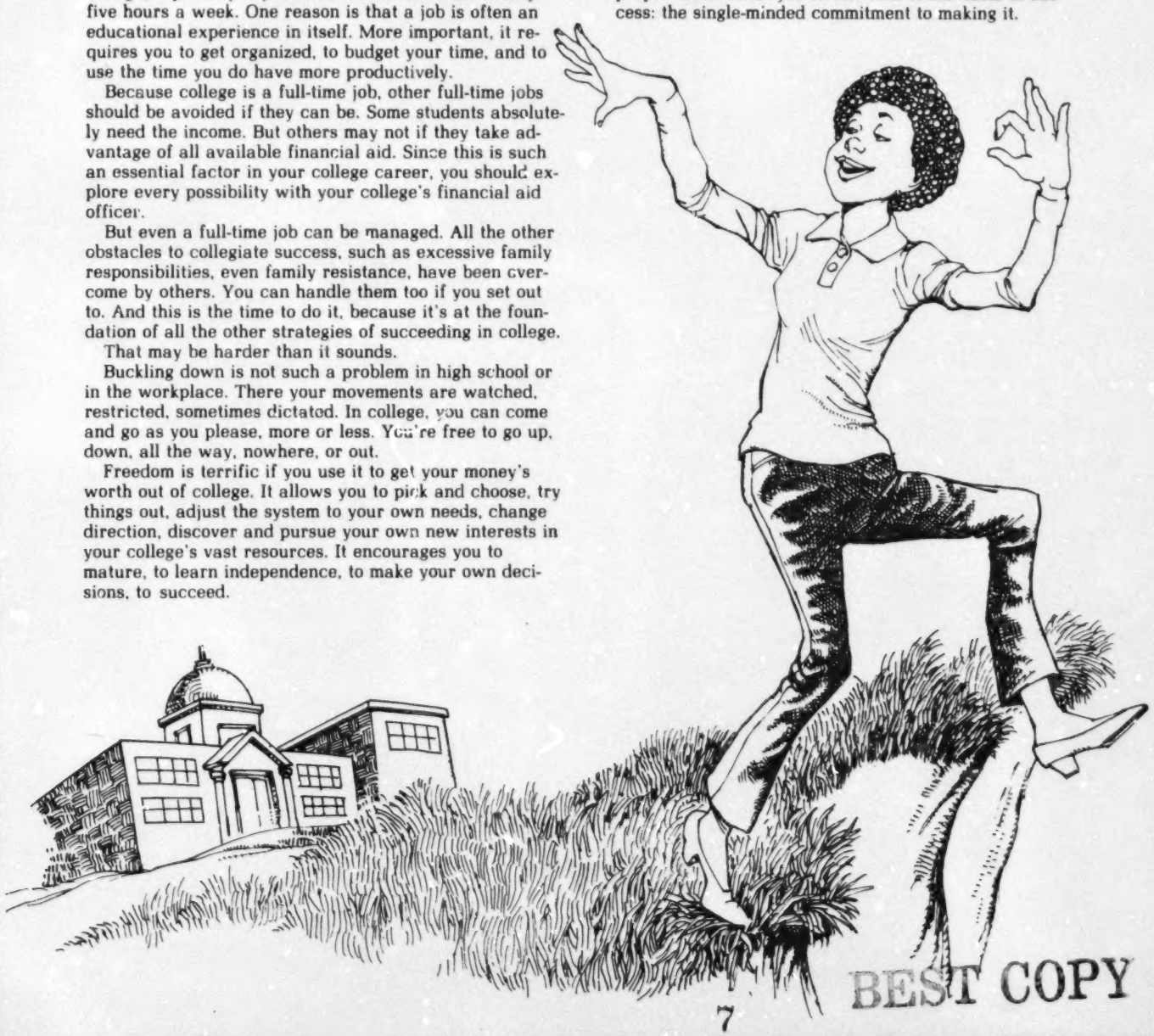
Buckling down is not such a problem in high school or in the workplace. There your movements are watched, restricted, sometimes dictated. In college, you can come and go as you please, more or less. You're free to go up, down, all the way, nowhere, or out.

Freedom is terrific if you use it to get your money's worth out of college. It allows you to pick and choose, try things out, adjust the system to your own needs, change direction, discover and pursue your own new interests in your college's vast resources. It encourages you to mature, to learn independence, to make your own decisions, to succeed.

But freedom can also be dangerous because it includes the freedom to fail. There are a lot of people in college who care about you, but the system itself is neutral. It allows you to pass right through college without learning much. It permits you to neglect your work, up to a point, and to keep your exposure to college down to the bare bones (going to class). It also allows you to drop out.

No one sets out to fail. But some students do fail because they cannot control the interference—the legitimate kind, like a job, and the other kind, like hanging out, adolescent games, lethargy. Without external discipline, they neglect to discipline themselves.

You will succeed in college to the extent that you eat, sleep, drink, and breathe it. Clear the decks of all the unnecessary competition and put necessary kinds in their proper slots. What you're left with is the basis of success: the single-minded commitment to making it.



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GETTING *Organized*

Before you grit your teeth and plunge ahead, stop. Vague notions of buckling down, getting through college and launching a career don't quite add up to direction. Before you go much further, you ought to determine where, approximately, you are going.

That means getting organized. It means setting your sights on the future and planning your college career accordingly, down to your semesters, weeks and days.

"What a drag!" you say. But it's actually the easier way. Since it's something you'll have to do eventually, the sooner you do it the more you'll save in wasted effort, bad habits and wrong moves.

Here's what it involves:

It may be too early to **plan your future,** but not to set some long-range goals, at least tentatively. What kind of person are you and what kind of person do you want to be? How would you like to spend your life after college? What kind of life-style would you want, say, ten years from now?

Choosing an occupation depends on your answers to such questions. Work, no matter what it is and no matter how important it is, is not the whole of your life. Your vision of yourself in the future should influence the kind of work you choose to do. In choosing a career, be guided also by your past achievements, your abilities, and your interests—simply what you would *enjoy* doing.

Determining your college major requires an important choice: between (1) a broad liberal arts program, or (2) a specialized professional or technical major. A broad liberal arts program is recommended if you have no strong occupational preference, if you want to sample various career fields through your college courses, or if you decide that the best preparation for a career is a good general education:

- **Without a definite occupation in mind,** you may keep your options open as a liberal arts major and make your career choice only when you're ready to.
- **With a definite occupation in mind,** you may still choose to prepare for it by majoring in liberal arts or taking a wide range of liberal arts courses (which is the kind of preparation some employers favor), or you may prefer to major in a more specialized professional or technical field.

Shaping your college career: In determining what courses to take and the order in which you take them, you must be guided by what your college offers and requires in your major. Study your college catalogue carefully, to be sure you're fully aware of the courses that you must take ("required"), those that you must take before others ("prerequisites"), and those you are free to select ("electives").

Outlining your college program—all of it, from the beginning to end—should be done, roughly, before you plan next semester's. First ink in your *basic skills* courses, which should be taken as early as possible since they will help you do well in all your other courses; then your other *required courses*, and next, those that you have to take as *prerequisites* for other courses. Finally, pencil in your possible choices of *electives*. The purpose of this sketchy outline, which you may later change, is to make sure you take all you have to and in logical order.

Programming your semesters: At the beginning avoid courses you think will be very difficult for you. Then, whenever you can, try to strike a balance or "mix" of courses each semester: some required courses and some electives; some courses that you expect to like and some that you don't; and subjects that call for heavy reading, writing or research, and those that demand less.

Planning your weeks: Many students believe that a weekly schedule, covering all the demands on their time, is silly. But it may, in fact, help you operate more efficiently, aid self-discipline and build your sense of control. Some students plot out the hours of the week they need for eating, sleeping, going to class, traveling, working, studying, leisure and meeting other commitments. Consider your own rhythms in scheduling your college work: for example, are you a morning person or an evening person? Assign your prime time to study and (if you're lucky in registration) classes.

Allowing for change: The freedom that is yours in college allows you to modify your initial plans, whether it's your weekly schedule or your career choice. More than 50 percent of all college students change their majors at least once during their college careers as a result of shifting interests. Although frequently switching majors isn't recommended, neither is sticking to a choice that's no longer right for you. In addition, all kinds of outside forces—from classes closing at registration to changes in the job market—might cause you to re-think earlier calculations. Within the framework of your general plan, allow yourself the flexibility to revise it.

Getting help: Whole books have been written on the subjects of each of the sections on this page. They can help you in your planning. Ask your career adviser, professors or counselor for recommendations on which books to read. And do consult them for one-on-one advice at every planning step.

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MAKING THE COLLEGE *Scene*

Do you know anyone who would go to an exotic city and spend a whole vacation there watching television? You're making the same mistake—cheating yourself—if you confine your college experience to the classroom.

For a student who has a job or other responsibilities, the temptation is great to get off campus fast. Your time is limited, and all that collegiate stuff outside of class is not mandatory. So why waste the time?

Because "all that stuff" is really not a waste. Contact with professors, friendships with your classmates, extracurricular activities, the riches of the library—these make up the "life" of your college life.

The faculty is a tremendous resource out of class as well as in. Professors, instructors and lecturers are more than teachers. They're scientists, writers, psychologists, business people, mathematicians, artists, philosophers, musicians, historians, engineers. They're experts and scholars, active and highly knowledgeable in their fields, often consulted by others for their ideas. And here they are—in your orbit.

Seek them out, especially those teachers whose fields you have a particular interest in. Ask for a few minutes of their time. Take the initiative to get acquainted with them during their office hours, by appointment, or at any other time and place that's mutually convenient. You can profit enormously by discussing your work in the course, its connections with other subjects, your career goals, or your problems.

Classmates offer a rich opportunity for new friendships. Their presence in your class gives them at least one thing in common with you. You'll find more. Those with different backgrounds are what "broadening your horizons" is all about. Aside from the rewards of friendship, you'll benefit from studying with them, exchanging ideas, helping them when they need help, and drawing on their support when you're faced with problems. The friends you make in college often remain your friends for life.

The first class session is a good time to introduce yourself to a few other students. Exchange telephone numbers so that if you are absent, they can give you the homework assignments and the material you missed in class. Try to arrange to study together and work on assignments together. This has both educational and social value. Very often, students who form "study groups" do far better in college than those who always work alone.

Clubs, teams, organizations and other **student activities** open you up to additional friendships, plus recreation. They may also add to your knowledge of an academic subject, expand your understanding of an occupational field, help sharpen your skills and give you real-life experience, all in a relaxed social setting.

"The true university," someone said a century ago, "is a collection of books." Today, your **college library** is more than that and more than a "study tank." Besides books and magazines, it's stocked with such audio and visual resources as films, cassettes, art and photographic reproductions, recordings of speeches, poetry and plays, all kinds of music—and more. Librarians are on hand to help acquaint you with what's there and how to find what you're looking for. Cash in on this treasure, not only for your work but for your pleasure.

Orientation programs are designed by your college to introduce you to the college scene. They explore such questions as course requirements, sources of financial aid, how to add a course or withdraw from one without penalty, and how to get a tutor or a transcript of your grades. They save you a lot of legwork by telling you where to go for all kinds of help. And they give you the opportunity to meet and share your concerns with fellow students.

Your college is rich in resources—people, services and opportunities. But none of them will come and get you. You will have to go and get them. Only your initiative will determine how much of a return you get from your investment in college.

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Study: WHERE, WHEN & HOW TO

After all the years you've been in school, what in the world can anyone possibly tell you about studying? It's just a matter of cracking the books, right?

Actually, no. For one thing, studying is not just reading. And it's not just memorizing, although some of that is necessary. It's learning by reading, thinking, reviewing and "getting it together"—connecting what's read with what's said in class and with your other experiences.

That effort demands systematic study. And for that you need to master some basic study skills and strategies. They'll help you learn more and faster, earn better grades and enjoy the whole process more.

Here are some suggestions:

The time you spend studying will be productive if it's of good quality. It's not only quantity that matters. As we've already suggested in discussing your weekly schedule, it should be *prime time*—your most alert hours—that you assign to college work. If you find your mind wandering when you try to study for hours and hours at a stretch, start with shorter periods and build up gradually to larger blocks of time. Don't force it: when your attention lags, take a break. Get up and do something else for a few minutes. But don't postpone it: while the proper frame of mind helps, don't wait indefinitely until the "perfect mood" for studying strikes.

The place matters too. The subway, for instance, may be all right for reading or reviewing materials you've already covered, but not for studying new or difficult material. You need peace and quiet, no company or other distractions, good lighting and ventilation, a straight chair (curling up makes it easy to doze off) and a clear table or desk. If your home does not have such a setting, locate a library or other comfortable study area on campus where you can go to regularly for study.

Techniques for studying vary with the individual and the subject. For many students, a three-step process works best. Try this and see if it works for you:

1. **Preview the material.** Before plunging into a reading assignment, check out the title, the first paragraph, the heading or first sentence of each paragraph, the bold-faced and italicized passages, the illustrations, the summaries and the study questions at the end, if there are any. This survey gives you a handle on the subject matter, its place in the course, and what to look for as you read.

2. **Read for understanding.** Most students need to read unfamiliar material several times. The first time around, don't worry about remembering things. Your main concern is grasping general ideas. Train yourself to read *actively*, with a pencil or pen in your hand (if the book is your own). Put marks in the margin next to passages that seem important. As you get used to doing this, it won't interfere with the primary purpose of your first reading: understanding.

3. **Read to remember.** Your understanding of the material is no guarantee of your remembering it later. This requires a second reading in which you (a) *underline* the key words, phrases or passages—but not too many of them if underlining is going to help you later to review the text. If you put pencil marks in the margin during your first reading, they can guide you to those passages that may now turn out to be worth underlining. In addition to or instead of underlining, (b) *take notes* on your reading, selecting only the most important points and phrasing the text's passages in your own words. Note taking, like underlining, makes the study process active. It impresses the material in your mind more forcefully than just reading does. It leads you to think and make connections with your class lectures and discussions and your own ideas and experiences. And it reduces the amount of material you will have to review for tests.

One other study activity can greatly help to strengthen the learning process:

Review the material with your classmates. This is no substitute for private studying, which has to come first. But once that's done, going over it with others helps to clarify and *test your understanding* of the material: if you can't express it, you haven't "gotten" it. Working in groups helps to *improve your understanding* by filling in gaps, vagueness, connections. It allows you to *compare* your understanding of the author's ideas with other people's interpretations, further sharpening and expanding your grasp of the subject. And it's another, pleasant form of *review*.

Reviewing with others may be formal, a structured exercise at a fixed time for that specific purpose: "Let's go over that chapter together." Or it may be casual, over lunch or at your leisure, simply chatting about the course work. Whatever form it takes, it's fun, using your new knowledge and bouncing it off other people. Research has shown that saying things is the most effective means of memorizing them—more than seeing, hearing or reading them. It's a powerful studying technique. And it's good preparation for the common practice of group activity in the world of work.

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A Class ACT

Do you remember the details of a television program you saw two weeks ago? Could you summarize its plot and pass a test on it? If not, no harm's done. But if you recollect no more about a class you attended recently, you're missing out. Unlike tube-watching, college classes demand more than simply sitting. Here's how to get the most out of them:

1. **Go to class prepared.** Class sessions are usually based on your assignments. If you haven't done those assignments, what the teacher and your classmates have to say may be mostly lost on you. If you've done the advance work, you'll understand the lecture more fully and participate in the discussions much more meaningfully.

2. **Listen actively.** That means more than hearing. Like effective reading, it requires you to relate what you hear to what you already know, and to identify the main points. Listen especially for such expressions as "the two major ideas are" or "it's important to remember that" and to whatever your professor repeats for emphasis.

3. **Notes are a must.** You cannot remember enough without them. Use abbreviations that are convenient and understandable to you, learn to use an outline form, and *select*. Don't even try to record everything said, even if you know shorthand. You don't want the words to travel directly from your instructor's mouth to your notebook without passing through your brain. If you miss something important, leave room in your notebook and fill it in later by asking a reliable classmate or your professor.

4. **Ask questions.** If you're confused about something, never hesitate to ask. What did the professor just say? Isn't that different from what the book says? What does that word mean? Can you run that by me once more? Ask! Professors want you to learn, but they can't read the questions in your mind. If you're not comfortable raising questions in class, approach the professor after class or make an office appointment. Don't let a single question go unanswered.

5. **Organize your notes** either while you're taking them or immediately afterwards. Otherwise they'll make little sense when you go back to them. The lecture may have a clear order, like the dates of important events or their causes and effects. But professors often speak without notes and include student feedback, making their presentations more interesting but less systematic than a book's. If necessary, add your own summary to tie it all together.

6. After class, **review your notes.** Make sure they are titled with subject headings and, when the time comes to prepare for tests, coordinated with your reading assignment notes. That way you'll get it all together. And, if you missed a connection or find what looks like a contradiction between text and lecture, you'll have a chance to clarify it.

7. Above all, **go to class.** There are all kinds of penalties for cutting. Make sure that you know your college's regulations and each professor's policy on lateness and absences. Otherwise you may discover, too late, that you have overcut and automatically dropped from that class. In some cases, this can have serious consequences even beyond that course.

But even when you're not forced to, go to class. Missing class gives you a handicap, a gap in your knowledge and understanding. Save your absences for unavoidable urgencies. Even then, make them up by contacting your teacher, in advance if possible, to find out what will be or has been covered. Also, call a classmate with whom you've exchanged phone numbers to get the class notes as well as new assignments you missed. That way you won't be short-changed on the session you missed and you'll be prepared for the next one.

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In reviewing the purposes of college, we said that a major one is expanding your *ability to learn.*

Developing that ability—to learn *on your own*—is among the main functions of your big college assignments, the term papers or research papers. Unlike your class sessions and textbook readings, they are exercises in *independent* study. They require you to investigate a subject systematically, find information on it from various sources, organize it, present it in your own words, and draw your own conclusions from it.

We say all this at the outset because if you don't understand the point of it all, the research paper can be a sweaty labor of senseless motions that produce nothing of value. Keeping the purposes in mind when you do a big assignment will make the whole process more meaningful, maybe even enjoyable. You'll have the challenge of digging on your own, making your own discoveries, and accomplishing a modest but original piece of research.

How to go about it: Your professor may give you specific instructions that are so complete you need to go nowhere else for direction. If not, or if you need to check procedural details, there are research manuals and English handbooks that give step-by-step directions for doing research and term papers. If you don't already own one, you can find them in the library or bookstore. Here are some general guidelines that may be useful—if you remember that they're all subject to the particular requirements of your instructor.

Give yourself enough time. To avoid Paper Panic, get started as soon as you receive the assignment. You need *chunks* of time to choose a topic, do library research, read, organize your notes, write and rewrite. You need a *spread* of time to think about each step and let all the facts and ideas sink in. Be kind to yourself by distributing the work over as long a period as possible.

If a topic isn't assigned or if you are given a choice, go out of your way to pick one of your own liking. You'll find it easier to do the work if you're interested in the subject. Of particular value are topics that might relate to your major or another course you are taking. Unless a topic pops immediately into your head, you may find inspiration in the index of your course textbook or in your notes. Check your choice against your professor's instructions, or with your professor directly, to be sure the topic is within the boundaries of the assignment.

Limit the topic. Students frequently choose topics that are too big. Then they do more work than necessary and cover too much territory not very well. It would be more effective to penetrate a smaller subject more deeply. Narrow the focus so that the topic can be treated properly within the assigned time and length.

Since a research project is a systematic investigation, the key to your work is a system. The following tips are the outline of one system, which you can adapt to suit your own style and assignment.

Begin your research by compiling a list of possible source materials, which is your *working bibliography.* As a starting point, consult your textbook for references to books, journals, or non-print materials that apply to your limited topic. To find others, use the library's card catalog, directories, and journal and newspaper indexes.

Prepare a *bibliography card* for each book or article you decide to look at. You won't know if you are actually going to use the material until you read it. You may discover additional sources as you go along. Add to and subtract from your "working bibliography" accordingly.

The next step is to *read* your sources and take notes on cards. Use your own words to summarize relevant material in each source you read. Use quotation marks religiously when copying the author's exact words.

Organize your paper. List the subtopics covered in your note cards. Prepare an *outline* for the body of the paper by putting those subtopics in a logical sequence. Then rearrange all the cards by grouping them according to the order of your outline. Complete your outline by adding entries for an introduction and a conclusion, which usually do not draw upon your specific sources.

You are now ready to write the *first draft.*

Following your outline, your paper should consist of an *introduction, body,* and *conclusion.*

The **introduction** may explain why you chose the topic, how it relates to your course of study and/or, briefly, how you intend to cover it.

The body of the paper should present the information you have gathered, with your analysis and interpretation if they are required. *Credit* every fact and idea that is not your own and not general knowledge to the sources you have consulted. Copy direct quotations accurately, using quotation marks. Since the bulk of your paper should be in your own voice, you should more often paraphrase the author. Whether you quote or paraphrase, you need a note or footnote giving the source of the quotation, fact or idea. Do not attempt to adopt someone else's words, facts or ideas as your own. That's plagiarism, a form of cheating for which penalties are severe.

The **conclusion** is the place to summarize and, in some assignments, to evaluate the material you've presented or relate it to a larger subject in the course.

Rewrite your first draft. Student writers, like professional writers, need to revise their work. Go over your paper for obvious mistakes. Then put it aside for as much time as you can. When you come back to it, you'll be able to read it critically and with a fresh perspective. Most important, does it have a governing idea? Is it developed clearly? Then review the organization, style, grammar, and spelling. Revise and rewrite as often as necessary.

Your final draft should follow the format (title page, margins, spacing, documentation style, and bibliography) specified by your instructor or your style book. Proofread it. The finished product should be clean, if not beautiful. It's the only one that counts.

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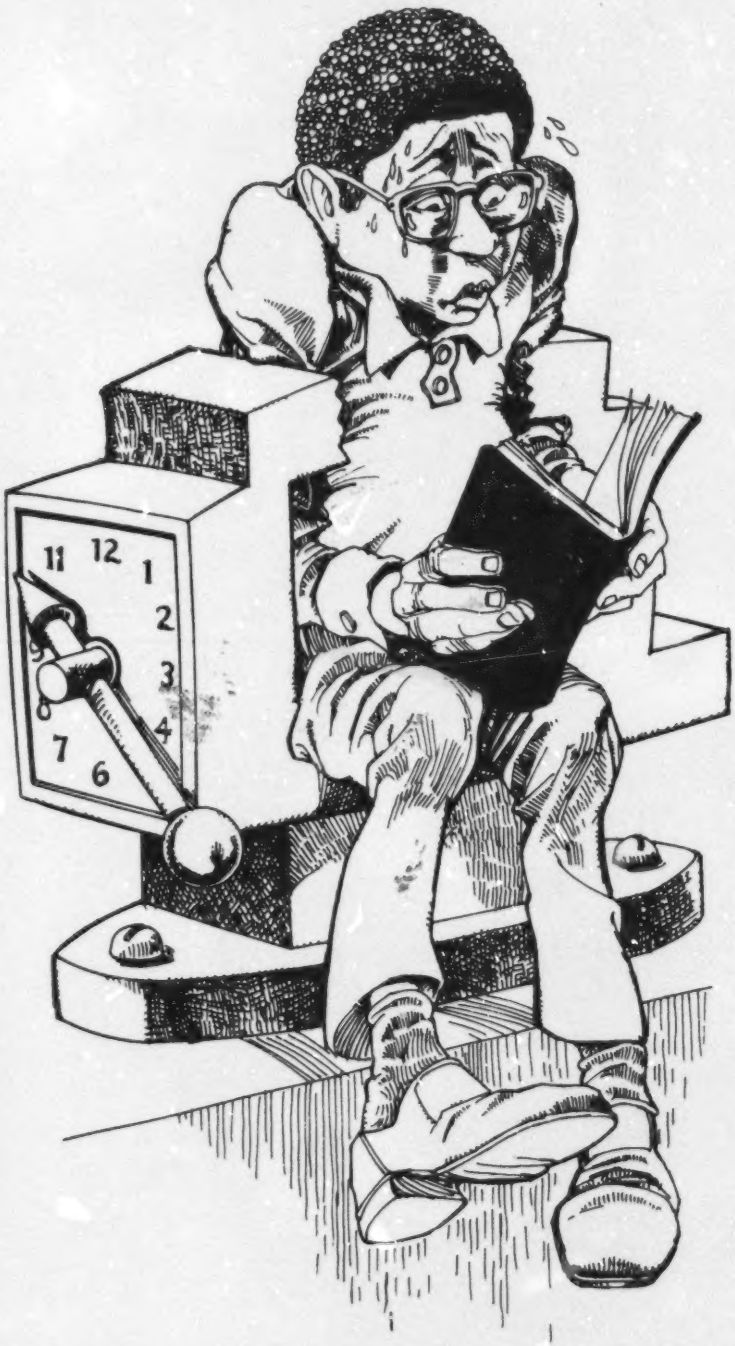
MAKING THE *Grade*



The budgeting of time — especially for study before tests — is a key to making the grade.

If you think we're going to have the nerve to tell you that tests are good for you, like medicine, you're right. But medicine is a treatment. Tests are more like checkups.

Unlike a physical, college tests can be prepared for. In fact, that's their point: to encourage you to *review and reinforce your studies*, to lock them in.

Tests serve other purposes. *They measure your understanding* of the course materials and their connections, since memorizing facts may not necessarily mean that you know their significance. And tests also *evaluate your learning habits*. Knowing it all does not produce a successful test performance if you haven't studied well. That's one reason you may sometimes discover, when your exam is returned, a wrong or missed answer to a question you "knew."

Test anxiety is like the tension that precedes and accompanies every other challenge. If it gets your adrenalin flowing in preparing for and taking the test, it's healthful. It's destructive if you approach a test as academic torture, something to agonize over. If your anxiety comes from a lack of confidence, as it often does, then the cure is in the source: your preparation.

The best preparation happens long before a test is scheduled. It's attending class, doing the assignments, and organizing and reviewing your notes as you go along (pages 9 and 10). Such steady work, in small doses, stretches out the learning process. And it makes the concentrated study for a test shorter and easier.

Here are some other tips for getting top mileage out of your college tests.

Before the test:

• *Review your notes* of class sessions and reading assignments. Make connections among them in your mind if you haven't already done so on paper. Go through the underlined or marked passages of your text if you haven't transferred them to your notes. Some students record important facts and ideas on index cards, which become handy studying tools. The very process of rewriting helps you understand and remember. Others invent memory devices of key points, like a made-up word of their first letters. Reduce and digest the materials into small packages you can retain.

• *Anticipate test questions.* If you were creating an exam on the covered material, what would you ask? For clues, check the subject headings in your text and the topics of class lectures. Think of good questions and prepare good responses. Even if those questions don't appear on the test, they will have helped you review in an interesting and effective way.

• *Study with others.* Preparing for tests with one or more of your classmates adds variety to a process that can become grinding. It also helps by giving you practice in *expressing* ideas (as you'll do on the test) that have been sitting silently in your mind. With others, you can more readily check your facts and understanding, detect gaps in your coverage of the material, benefit from new insights, and build your self-assurance.

• *Cramming*—squeezing your preparation into the final pretest hours—has some limited value for some students. For others, all it does is add to their test anxiety. In certain circles, all-night crash sessions are considered chic. If it works, it will work only in reviewing what you've already covered before, and then it will

not last much beyond the test itself. *It will not work* if you're trying to absorb new material for the first time and if the cramming extends to the very last moments before the test.

• *Arrive for the test early and rested.* All your work will be compromised if your head is fuzzy from insufficient sleep. And you don't need the additional time pressure that lateness causes.

During the test:

• *Read the directions,* carefully. Scan all the questions before you start answering the first. Pay careful attention to their key verbs, such as "name," "outline," "describe," "discuss," and "compare," all of which demand different kinds and lengths of response. No matter how terrific they are, answers to the wrong questions don't count.

• *Budget your time.* Get the most out of what you know by dividing your time according to the importance of the questions. Look at how many points each is worth. If a question is a 5-pointer, don't give it 20 points of effort just because you know that subject well. Spend more time and energy answering the questions that count more. If you draw a blank on a question, skip it and go back to it after you've done the others.

• *Take time to think,* especially about questions you're unsure of. If it's a difficult one, place the question in the context of the course and try to find its connection with what you know. Often the very act of thinking triggers your memory and enables you to answer a question that had you stumped. Jotting down ideas that *may* be related also lessens panic and may trigger the right response.

• *Outline answers* to essay questions. Briefly list the parts of your answer for your own guidance. Then number them in logical order. Such a scratch outline will keep you from omitting something substantial and will help you organize your answer.

• *Review and proofread* your answers at the end. Leave time to go over what you've written, to add or take out material, and to catch and correct errors.

After the test:

• *Grades* are among the functions of tests. But those letters and numbers are not very instructive in themselves. Much more useful is what tests tell you, precisely, about what you've learned and how you've learned. If you use tests constructively, you won't let a poor grade get you down.

• *Learn from your mistakes.* "Trial and error" is an effective way of learning if you learn from the errors. That takes more effort than simply reading your score. If you did not do as well as you hoped, review your test to see where and why you went wrong. Identify your mistakes and correct them. If you can't figure out where you went wrong, ask your professor. Not only will this exercise increase your understanding of the subject, but it may reveal flaws in your study habits. Refine them accordingly.

Review is the treatment that completes the process. If you do that conscientiously, you'll guarantee that, no matter what your grades are, you're getting the most out of your tests. Then, even a failure will have served a useful purpose. And, with each succeeding test, you'll do better.

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Solving THE BIG PROBLEMS

Despite all your efforts to succeed in college, you may find the going rough. Academic, financial and personal problems can interfere with your plans, slow your progress and get you down. What are the solutions?

Dropping out of college is usually not a solution but a surrender. No matter how innocent you are as a victim of circumstances, dropping out may leave you with a sense of personal failure. For all the reasons you're going to college in the first place and for the further reason that you'd lose the investment you've already made in it, don't consider this drastic measure until you've given it a lot of thought and discussed it with counselors and professors.

"Stopping out" of college for a while is similarly dangerous. Regardless of your determination, leaving temporarily often turns out to be permanent. That's because it's harder to return than to hang in while you're here. Once you're out, you may develop new responsibilities, life patterns and distractions that conflict with college. The prospect of starting all over again will also discourage another try. The letdown of failure this time and the fear of repeating it will further stop you from risking it again. Besides, whenever you plan to return, you may very well be faced with the same problems and perhaps even new ones.

It's possible that stopping out or dropping out may be your only answer. But before you resort to those extremes, consider the constructive solutions available to you.

First, recognize that others have run into roadblocks similar to yours. The details and the combination of your particular troubles may be unique. But those same problems have been and are being overcome.

Second, because student difficulties fall into certain patterns, your college has created the resources to cope with them. Just as you have made an investment in college, your college has made investments in your success. They are the services you can tap for help in solving your problems.

If you're having difficulty with a course, take action at the first sign of trouble. Don't wait for "something" to somehow happen by itself. Often, your mastery of one section of course work is essential to understanding everything that follows. Don't wait till it's way over your head. The time to get help is the instant you think you may need it. Here are some options:

- *Confer with your instructor:* He has probably had experience with the type of trouble you're having. He can either help you directly or guide you to the help you need.
- *Form a study group* with your classmates, since the snag you've hit has probably tripped up others. This serves you well even when there's no particular problem.
- *Sign up for tutoring.* That's special, individualized assistance from someone who is well-versed in the material and can teach it to you on a one-to-one basis.
- *Use the skill centers* in reading, writing and mathematics if you are having trouble in these areas.

If you simply have too much work, see your counselor. You may very well be able to cope with—and in fact enjoy—each of your courses. But the sheer quantity of work may be excessive, especially if you have outside responsibilities on top of it. Your counselor may be able to help you find ways of managing your time better, studying more effectively, or planning a more balanced program by rearranging your schedule. Sometimes cutting down is better than cutting out entirely or failing.

If it's a financial problem, there are three places for you to go for help:

- *Your college's financial aid office* will explore with you every last possibility of assistance through a grant, loan, scholarship or work-study assignment and, if you need it, means of budgeting your limited funds so that they cover your expenses.
- *Your college's placement officers* will help you find a part-time or full-time job, if that's what you need. They can also help you in writing resumes, preparing for interviews and developing more effective job search techniques.
- *Your dean of students,* counselor or financial aid office may help you overcome a temporary emergency, such as a delay in processing your application for financial assistance.

If it's a personal problem, see your counselor. Is it relationships with your parents, children or friends? Your health or concern over it? Your job or family responsibilities? Frustration with your status in college? Disappointment with your academic performance? Uncertainty about where you're going and how to get there? Whatever the pressures that may be wearing you down, your counselor is trained to help you through them or refer you to someone who can. Just talking it out with a sympathetic listener helps too.

Every college structures its "student services" in different ways. Those are the people and the offices that can help you every step of the way. It's your move.

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Tel. 220-6284

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Tel. 780-5901

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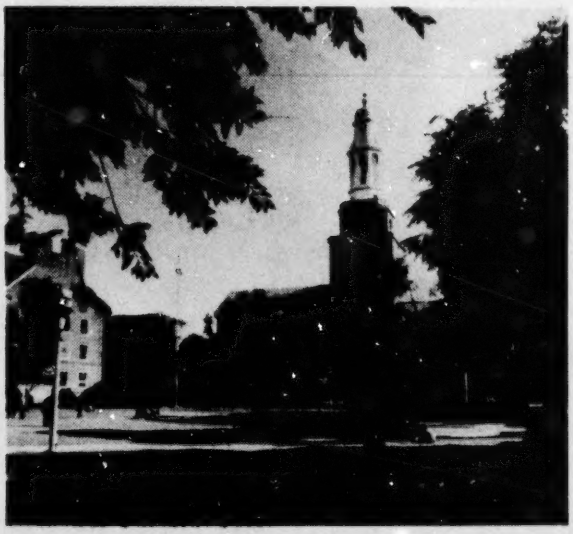

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Tel. 643-8595

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65-30 Kissena Boulevard
Flushing, New York 11367
Tel. 520-7385

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Bayside, New York 11364
Tel. 631-6236

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130 Stuyvesant Place
Staten Island, New York 10301
Tel. 390-7807

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150-14 Jamaica Avenue
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MAKING IT TO CUNY

Admission: To enroll at The City University of New York, you need a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (G.E.D.). To be admitted to a senior college, you need to have achieved a certain high school grade point average.

Tuition: *For residents of New York State,* full-time tuition at all of CUNY's community colleges is $612.50 per semester; at the senior colleges and New York City Technical College, it is $625 per semester; part-time tuition at the community colleges is $40 per credit, and at the senior colleges and New York City Technical College $47 per credit.

Financial Aid: To help defray all or part of your tuition and other costs, depending on your income or your family's income, you may be eligible for a tuition grant from the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and/or a federal Pell Grant, neither of which has to be repaid. You may also qualify for College Work-Study, a National Direct Student Loan, a Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, or a New York State Guaranteed Student Loan. If you are in need of both academic and financial support, you may qualify for SEEK or College Discovery.

For further information, applications, and individual counseling:

Call, visit or write to the Admissions Office of the college of your choice at the address given on the previous page.

Visit the CUNY Office of Admission Services at 101 West 31st Street, in Manhattan (by bus, or subway to 33rd and 34th Street stations). **No appointment necessary.**
Hours: Monday through Wednesday 9 am-5:45 pm
Thursday 10 am-5:45 pm
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Phone the CUNY Office of Admission Services, **212-947-4800.**

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